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IRAN:

Democratic Kurdistan Party Official Interviewed

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[Interview with Dr. Sa'id, head of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, by 'Ali Keshtgar, an officials of the People's Feda'i Organization, published in FEDA'I; place and date not given]

[Text] In the Khordad-Tir [22 May-22 Jul] issue of the journal FEDA'I, the organ of the central organization of the People's Feda'i of Iran, an interview was published in which Dr. Sa'id responded to questions by 'Ali Keshtgar. Upon first glance, the questions in this interview are disarming, but the answers are less convincing.

In our opinion, the importance of this interview—that is, the importance of issues around which the interview revolves—concerns the future of Iran and is too important for a large number of interested readers to be unaware of. While 'Ali Keshtgar uses clear concepts, by way of contrast, Dr. Sa'id is ambiguous and leaves the reader uncertain in many respects.

The following are questions that have come to mind in this connection. While of the two demands, "democracy for Iran and autonomy for Kurdistan," he gives priority to the first, that is, "democracy for Iran," and says that autonomy for Kurdistan is only possible in a democratic Iran, he will only accept democracy for Iran when it is tied to the autonomy of Kurdistan. Does the reader not have the right to question: Then, priority is given to "autonomy for Kurdistan," not "democracy for Iran"? Does this impression not in fact conform more to the actions of the Kurdish Democratic Party? Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the fact that the leaders of this party had entered negotiations, even though dramatic and futile, with the government of religious guardianship.

And now Dr. Sa'id will agree to negotiate with the representatives of the government of religious guardianship, provided, of course, that this government accepts the autonomy of Kurdistan. Here we arrive at the question: If autonomy for Kurdistan can be obtained through negotiations with a government about whose antidemocratic nature there is no doubt, then can "democracy for Iran" be set aside until later? Another question that comes to mind concerns the "nationalities" in Iran. Dr. Sa'id speaks of the Baluches, Turkomans, Azaris, Arabs, and so on, as Iranian "nationalities" and calls Iran a "multinational" country in which the "Persians" are the majority. We knew that Iran is a country with several languages, religions, nationalities, and so on, but we did not know before that various "nations" have lived in it. We do not know what criteria are used to make these categorizations. No matter how we searched in the dictionaries, we could find nothing under "Fars" but the name of a province, the geographical borders of which we need not repeat here. But we were astonished to hear about the "Persian injustice" toward minorities. A look at the past and present history of Iran shows that Turkic tribes, both in the monarchical families and in various government areas, have truly had a greater share than their proportion of the population. Is the definition of various "nationalities" who live in Iran based on language, and is a Persian a person whose mother tongue and everyday language is Persian?

Another problem that comes to mind is, why does Dr. Sa'id consider the regime in Spain, which is a monarchical one, democratic, whereas he believes that in Iran democracy and progress are only possible in a republic? In order to convince the interested reader, he needs to provide further reasoning, which is missing in the interview.

Undoubtedly, so far there are those who have not read this interesting interview and probably have other questions that we hope to be able to discuss in a free forum and receive answers from various sides. For this reason, we are publishing the interview partially condensed.

An Interview and Several Other Questions About the Interview With Dr. Sa'id, the Head of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, by 'Ali Keshtgar, One of the Officials of the People's Feda'i Organization

[Keshtgar] Suppose that there is now a government in Tehran that will agree to negotiate with the Kurdish Democratic Party, albeit an impossible supposition; however, what are the demands of the party from this imagined government, and under what circumstances will the Kurdish Democratic Party refuse to engage in armed struggle? In other words, given the changes in the world, have the demands and policies of the party changed over the past few years?

[Dr. Sa'id] Look, the issue is our policy vis-a-vis any regime and vis-a-vis the regime of the Islamic Republic. On the whole, the party policy is first democracy for Iran and autonomy for Iranian Kurdistan. What comes first or second is also natural. The goal of the Democratic Party is the establishment of democracy in Iran, and, in our opinion, autonomy in Iranian Kurdistan is secondary and will be the result of this democracy, which means a government of the people, who must make a decision about every issue that concerns their country. Naturally, when democracy is established throughout Iran, implementing democracy in Iranian Kurdistan will take the form of a "federation." Hence, our slogan is clear: The establishment of democracy in Iran in such a way that all the people will be able to express and implement their views about their destiny. Naturally, given the conditions of Kurdistan, this democracy will reflect their national rights. So far, we have announced it as autonomy, but, of course, at that time, they will decide themselves.

[Keshtgar] But this is two issues, first, the wishes of the people and, second, the position of the party. Speaking of democracy for Iran and autonomy for Kurdistan requires the public opinion of the people of Iran. My specific question is this: Do you or do you not agree with the public opinion of the people of Iran on the whole concerning a new Constitution and a new founders' assembly that automatically includes the issue of Kurdistan?

[Dr. Sa'id] No, and I will explain. First, let me say that when we speak of wanting autonomy for Kurdistan, it is from a general point of view that we consider Iran a multinational country. Besides the Persians, there are also Azaris, Kurds, Baluches, Turkomans, and Arabs in Iran. Therefore, in a democratic Iran the same rights would apply for the Kurds that do for any of these nationalities. Consequently, perhaps the general solution for Iran is a federation in which all peoples have their own particular rights.

The reason that so far we have only spoken of autonomy for Kurdistan is that we have not wanted to speak on behalf of others. We think that in a free Iran in which people are able to express and implement their views, this would be a practical system. This is the best system for a multinational Iran.

In regards to the other issue you raised, considering the history, customs, and traditions that exist in Iran, the acceptance of national rights for other than the Persians seems somewhat difficult for the Iranians to comprehend today. For this reason, we think that if other regions are going to express their views about Iranian Kurdistan, for instance, or Fars, Esfahan, Shiraz, Tehran, and so on, since it is not only intangible to them but is something contrary to traditions and customs, at best it would be disinterested, and most probably they would oppose it.

Hence, I say briefly, in regard to whether or not the people of Kurdistan want to live in a democratic Iran, we must only ask the people of Kurdistan. If in regard to autonomy for Kurdistan, there is a discussion in the founders' assembly or in the Constitution and it is put to a public vote, the people of Kurdistan will always be in the minority. Concerning the rights of the people of Kurdistan, only the people of Kurdistan must be asked.

[Keshtgar] Considering that I believe that first the issues that seem complex must be clarified and made comprehensible for the people through explanations and propaganda, and if such issues are immediately put to a referendum, most probably they will have negative results, while if it is done through a widespread educational and cultural campaign, the issue that is put to a vote will have positive results, the problem is that, for instance, on the day following the fall of the regime of the Islamic Republic and the establishment of a democratic government in Iran, if in regards to Azarbaijan only the people of Azarbaijan, and in regards to Kurdistan only the people of Kurdistan, and so forth, are asked, what issue can be put to a vote of the totality of the Iranian people? How can Iran as a united country be discussed? This is very important to me, because I support Kurdistan and autonomy. How can one defend the autonomy of Kurdistan without disrupting the unity of Iran?

[Dr. Sa'id] Look, these issues are clear. In a federation, monarchical, republic or any other system in a country, the limits of the authority of the central government and the limits of the authority of each autonomous region are clear. It is not a problem unique to Iran. There are numerous examples in the world, and in this regard your question as to when to ask for the votes of all the people of Iran and in which cases only to ask the opinions of the people of an autonomous region can be answered. For example, in regard to the government system in Iran, whether or not it is a republic, the opinion of all the people of Iran would be asked. You can see that the issue is clear. Examples of countries that have autonomous regions include Switzerland, Germany, the United States, and Spain, which indicate what issues are general and what issues only concern the people of a region. In the programs of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, we have already clarified what cases are within the authority of the central government and what cases are within the authority of the autonomous government. Nevertheless, it is simple. We can still talk about it, decide it beforehand, and determine the authority of each. But in any case, in regard to an issue that concerns Kurdistan itself, such as the autonomy of Kurdistan, we should first ask the people of Kurdistan and discuss their opinion on the general laws of Iran. In other words, even if this idea were rejected in a referendum, it is clear that this public opinion would be contrary to the opinion of the people of Kurdistan.

[Keshtgar] Considering that I am personally against raising many issues in terms of majority and minority, for instance, I oppose referring to the Zoroastrian minority or the Muslim majority, since we are looking for nonreligious and secular laws and regard religion and matters of the conscience absolutely personal, I want to know clearly what is intended by the Democratic Party when it speaks of the majority and the minority?

[Dr. Sa'id] When we speak of national minorities, it is because Iran is comprised of various Persian, Azari, Kurdish, Baluch, Turkoman, and Arab nationalities, among whom the Persians are the majority, and hence, compared to this majority, others are considered minorities. This is merely in terms of national numbers. In any case, it must be admitted that being Iranian is different from being a Persian or a Kurd. If we are not more Iranian than others, we are not less so, and the whole of Iranian history verifies this. We only want to change the concept of being Iranian from that of being only Persian, because the Persians are the majority. Of course, this does not mean at all that the country of Iran, with its federations or autonomous regions, such as Kurdistan, Baluchestan, Turkmenistan (I do not know about Azarbaijan, that has to do with what they think), should not have a unified language, a unified foreign policy, a unified central government, or a unified army. But one cannot deny the national characteristics of various regions of Iran. What I mean by minority concerns the population vis-a-vis the Persians, who are, of course, in the majority.

[Keshtgar] My other question is: What is your opinion in regard to the charge of separatism made against the Kurdish Democratic Party, not only by the central government but also by the forces opposing this government, given the earlier responses of the Kurdish Democratic Party?

[Dr. Sa'id] An answer to this question seems difficult in an interview, because there are numerous issues that would require an article or many articles. But, briefly, the issue of territorial integrity so far has been an excuse for the central government to suppress all democratic demands, including the demands of the whole nation. You know well that, for instance, during the time of the shah, any sort of political activity was considered to be the result of foreign provocation and was suppressed. In Iran, the central government of the Persians (of course, I never consider the Persians chauvinistic, I only mean the central government) always, in addition to the general pressures put on all the people of Iran, puts additional pressure on nationalities under the pretext of territorial integrity.

I believe that an Iranian democratic intellectual must come out of such frameworks and shells. The dogmas must be eliminated and the taboos broken. At the present time, in response to any democratic demand in Kurdistan or any other region, the intellectuals, especially the democratic Iranians, ask us to accept territorial integrity, national rule, and such (the same things that the shah said). First of all, we consider this an insult and do not know why we should be advised to be Iranian and told that they are more Iranian than we are. How could it be considered democratic when from the beginning you force us into accepting a "taboo" and a framework? This is coercion, and we feel offended.

When we are told that there has been an injustice against nationalists in Iran, and there has been merely general injustice, we say that in addition to general injustice, injustice against nationalities has also existed. It is injustice against a nationality when I, as a Kurd, am obliged to be educated from the first days of school in Persian and even at this point am unable to write two words in Kurdish. Such statements belong to those who are not Kurds or are not from the nationality regions, and even if they are, they are included in and belong to the government.

In this case, you must ask the people of Kurdistan, for example, myself. For instance, between 1344 and 1347 [21 Mar 1965-20 Mar 1969], about 500 educators in Kurdistan (I was one of the first ones) were exiled to the central and other regions without any reason or explanation. Now, they say that there was no injustice against the nationalities during the shah. Let them explain why in three years 500 to 700 Kurdish educators were sent to regions such as Qom and Arak without any explanation. You see that injustice against the nationalities has existed in Iran, and those who claim the establishment of a democracy for Iran must break these frameworks and taboos and stop giving advice to Kurds about being Iranian. Indeed, even historically, the Kurds are the most original Iranians and founders of Iran, even before the Achaemenians. Being Iranian lies deep in the sentiments and thoughts of Kurds, on the whole, and there is no need for threats and advice by others.

In the same way that he looks at the former Soviet Republics, Yugoslavia, and so on, from a democratic perspective, in regards to Iran, too, the Iranian intellectual must think likewise and understand that the creation of a country and living within a geographical framework is only based on deep, voluntary wishes, inclinations, and feelings, not through pressure, in a narrow, predetermined framework.

[Keshtgar] Doctor, as for me, as I consider myself an Iranian intellectual and believe that the rights of the nationalities must be honored, I think that, for instance, for me, who comes from Jahrom, south of Shiraz, to say, for instance, to the people of Sanandaj to do this or that otherwise this or that will happen [as published], this is all clear, and there is no argument. But the necessary point that I have heard earlier in your statements and must be emphasized is that, due to its long history, Iran has certain characteristics that separate it from federative countries, for example, Switzerland and the like, that are new, where, for instance, three nationalities and three languages are placed side by side and comprise the Swiss federation. I think the common history of all Iranian ethnic groups is several thousand years old, and under historical, linguistic, and traditional influences, and even under the influence of religions before and after Islam and other issues since the arrival of the Aryan tribe, has altogether created such a unity among the Iranian ethnic groups that distinguish it completely from others. In my opinion, it is logical, for all these reasons, that we defend the unity of all the Iranian ethnic groups in a united country called Iran, naturally on a voluntary and democratic basis. In your opinion, is all of this not reason for all these ethnic groups to be able to live together in a united Iran?

[Dr. Sa'id] You see, the issue depends on from which direction we start and from which side we look at it. If we look at the theoretical side and the historical documents, this is one way, and from a realistic point of view is another.

The truth is that Iranian Kurds, if they do not want something more than other peoples, do not want anything less.

But if we look at the issue from a historical and theoretical point of view, we must say that, of course, Iran in the course of history has been created from various ethnic groups. But nothing is forever. If a nation has lived together for 1,500 years, for what reason can it not now live separately? The issue is today's conditions. If the world is not changing, naturally friendship, partnerships, coexistence, and views will all change [as published]. Moreover, no historical reality indicates that Iranian ethnic groups have always lived together. Azarbaijan,

Tajikestan, and Afghanistan all separated, and the world did not come to an end. Why can one not separate now? Is it because those separations were by force? In other words, accepting that what is done by force is acceptable? No, that is not so. Living together is only based on understanding, and no hundred- or thousand-year history can justify it. It is as if to say to the children of a family that since they have not separated from the family at age 18, now at age 20 they no longer have the right to separate. This is not rational.

[Keshtgar] Another issue of the present world is international alliances. You know well that due to issues such as the environment, production, the economy, and cultural issues, the world has been forced to unite more than ever before. Today, issues such as atomic energy, the environment, common markets, world peace, and living requirements force countries to come closer every day. If mankind wants to preserve the environment, the ozone, the seas, etc., it must submit to more cooperation. It is for this reason that Europe wants to unite today. But in the East, due to the existence of dictatorships and strangulation and as a result of backwardness compared to the West, there is less of a tendency towards alliance. Now, under such circumstances, is it not the duty of the progressive intellectual to work toward alliance and unity?

As an intellectual and also a political activist who is aware of the national rights you referred to, who supports defending a united Iran and even further supports regional alliance and hopes that one day in the Middle East the countries in the region will unite, first economically and later politically, I think the creation of new viable borders that, despite our wishes, will be coupled with war and conflict is dangerous and destructive. In this connection, I call for the efforts of Kurdish and Persian intellectuals.

[Dr. Sa'id] In this regard, I agree with you fully and will not explain further.

The world today is not a world of small economic units, and the efforts that are under way to unite Europe show that even large industrial countries are unable to continue their life in isolation. But the issue is that the people must be made aware of this. In this regard, the criterion is the wishes of these countries and not, for instance, to force the people of Denmark to accept a united Europe.

In regards to Iran and the region as a whole, the people must realize this reality. This will be done in time and through the intellectuals, and it is the duty of every progressive and alert political party. But this must not be imposed on them, because the criterion for everything is the democratic wishes of the people. But territorial integrity and national unity, and it is not clear from which democratic rights they have been taken, should not be imposed on them, particularly by intellectuals who speak of human rights and democracy. Where in the human rights charter is there any mention of the principle of territorial integrity and national unity?

The principle is the wishes of the people with consideration for the realities, even though the duty of progressive individuals is to guide and encourage the people towards more unity.

[Keshtgar] My last question in this regard is: Does the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, considering the present realities, do anything to inform the people about unity or not?

[Dr. Sa'id] As I have said, this is the opinion of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran since 47 years ago. Fortunately, we are able to claim this, and anyone can investigate it. Contrary to the opinion of many, it has never been a political tactic, and the Kurdish Democratic Party, which is the true representative of the people of Kurdistan, has a completely clear view in this regard.

[Keshtgar] Now I want to pose several questions of the day. First, considering the conditions in the whole region, that is, for instance, the recent referendum in Iraq, the activities of the Kurds in Turkey, and the suppressing position of the Islamic Republic with regard to the Kurds, and considering the general changes in the world and the global discussion of the Kurdish issue, how do you see the immediate perspective of the region, either positively or negatively?

[Dr. Sa'id] Considering the present trend in the world, various factors allow us to think that conditions, especially in countries with a Kurdish minority, cannot continue as they are, because none of these countries are democratic, and the present conditions in the world require democracy. It is clear that the future of such anachronistic governments as Iran and Turkey will be to move toward democracy. Of course, this is not an issue for one or two years; this is a long-term perspective. In other words, in the long term, all of these countries will have to change. If so, that is, if democratic rule is established in these countries, there will be no need to change the borders, in the same way that French-speaking Belgium or Switzerland are not obliged to be French. The issue is merely the historical and cultural past. For instance, Turkey, with 12 million Kurds, cannot deny their existence and will have to accept democracy. The sooner these countries move in this direction, the sooner they will accept secession of these masses. Separation is natural for people whose national rights have been ignored after years of living and hard work.

The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran has always made an effort to familiarize the Kurdish people with their national identity and, this has continued even under conditions of constant suppression and national pressure.

[Keshtgar] What is your suggestion to the intellectuals and all those who might somehow cooperate with you?

[Dr. Sa'id] First, the true intellectuals and democrats of Iran, that is, those who do more than make claims, must, instead of spouting the slogans of the time of the monarchy, believe in and emphasize the democratic rights of the people of Kurdistan—simple and truthful acceptance of the rights of the people of Kurdistan within the framework of Iran—in which case, there will be no problem for Iran.

Why is there not as much propaganda with regard to Kurdistan as there is for Tajikestan, which has been separated?

[Keshtgar] The next question is: Do you support the policy of negotiating with the government of the Islamic Republic, given its history? Have there been negotiations recently, and is there such a possibility?

[Dr. Sa'id] In this regard, after the assassination of Dr. Qasemlu, we have had no contact. Neither from our side nor from the regime's side has there been any tendency, and I think, as was emphasized in the conference, that this assassination fully showed the nature of the regime. We believe that, contrary to what is said about the change in the policy of the regime, this regime is unable to accept the democratic demands of the people of Kurdistan, and if, due to the change in the world conditions and so on, some day it is forced to accept them, it will no longer be the present regime. Within the framework of this regime, we have no hope of establishing a democracy. But on political issues, one cannot speak so decisively. For example, if one day the regime of the Islamic Republic claims to agree to autonomy for Kurdistan, we will be obliged (if this autonomy is announced officially beforehand) to negotiate with that government. But in regard to autonomy itself, we do not agree to any negotiations. In other words, any likelihood of negotiations by us can only take place within the framework of official autonomy that is pre-conditional.

[Keshtgar] Are you aware that at the present time we lack a serious and overall organized democratic opposition in Iran, except in Kurdistan, where the Democratic Party, as a strong party, has a popular base? (In my personal opinion, which I have always expressed without fear of threats, the Mojahedin movement is a dangerous, neofascist religious movement, and this movement can by no means bring Iran closer to democracy. If it comes to power some day, it will be a downward movement. And like the monarchists, if they come to power some day, it will be a government that believes the people owe it something. In Iran, monarchy means dictatorship.) We are under such circumstances, with riots in Mashhad, Arak, and Shiraz occurring on a very widespread scale. If these incidents occur in Tehran, Tabriz, Shiraz, and other large Iranian cities, they might result in the fall of the regime. Under such circumstances, the lack of a serious overall democratic opposition in Iran is worrisome, because, as such, one cannot say that the same thing will occur that occurred in regards to the monarchical regime—that we are moving toward democracy. Considering all of this, I want to know your party's stand on this issue. What suggestions does it have? With which forces and at what speed is it prepared to cooperate towards such a unity?

[Dr. Sa'id] Let me say that we have frequently seen (and I am happy that you have repeated it) that what is keeping the regime of the Islamic Republic afloat is not its own influence and power (as in the early years) but the weakness of the opposing forces. In other words, the power of the regime lies in the weakness of the opposition. I am not speaking about Kurdistan. There we do not have such a problem. After 13 years of struggle, the great majority of people of Kurdistan reject and repudiate the regime as a whole, and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, both in terms of political influence and practical resources, is able to control Kurdistan under whatever conditions that occur. This matter concerns the totality of Iran, considering that the issue of Kurdistan can only be solved within the framework of Iran.

In regard to the recent demonstrations, our close investigation clearly shows that the people of Iran have serious political, economic, and cultural problems. But these people have no goal. In other words, the discontent has not been formulated, and their demands are not organized. Because of the lack of political organization, these uprisings necessarily lack a clear mandate. Every day the need for creating a democratic opposition in Iran is sensed more than ever before, and the concern is not that this opposition immediately perform miracles. The main concern is that the people of Iran themselves dismiss this regime. But these people need a guiding line and light. Disunity and lack of political organization among the opposition is, in fact, the cause of the disunity and confusion of the people of Iran.

As in the last congress of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, the documents of which have been published, we have stated that we have proposed the creation of this front comprised of the democratic and progressive forces and explained our views about a democratic and progressive party, because we consider monarchy as neither democratic nor progressive. Secondly, this front must officially recognize the rights of all the nationalities in Iran. Third, this force must offer clear content with its proposed democracy. (Without listing the details, it must specify what it will offer the people.) And, finally, this front must be progressive, that is, it must support social justice, a front composed of leftist democratic forces, individuals, and personalities.

[Keshtgar] Nevertheless, here I must say that despite the activities of all the progressive forces, there are many problems in the way of the creation of such a front. I believe, to the extent possible and under the circumstances that we are in, we must find a way for individuals and movements with differing and even opposing views to come together toward a common goal. Otherwise, it will not be practical. In other words, for instance, we say, without the monarchists and without the supporters of the Islamic regime or any other religious dictatorship. In this case, if we accept that all the forces who support

democracy in Iran and believe in the institutional values of a republic (in other words, covering all of your demands), meaning they believe in the basic values of human rights, should come together, an alternative in the form of a political movement can be created, but the individuals, institutions, and personalities are on the whole very different and will face problems in regard to details, and this might continue for years. What is necessary to create such a front is to take advantage of and give direction to the riots that are likely to occur in Tehran tomorrow and result in the immediate fall of the regime. At the present time, after all the experiences of the past few years that I have had in such discussions and which have not made any progress, I believe, to the extent possible, we must not argue about details. In other words, in my opinion, we must cooperate with anyone who supports freedom and believes in a democracy in place of the Islamic Republic, even if it is contrary to your demands, and vice versa, because otherwise nothing will be formed.

[Dr. Sa'id] In general, I agree with those of you who say we should not argue about the details. Nevertheless, we do not believe in "all together." We have experienced it once before. If something is unable to clearly respond to our problems, it is meaningless. In the least it must be made clear with which forces we will cooperate, and if some day these forces succeed the present regime, what the result will be. Words such as freedom and democracy are very elusive. The shah, too, spoke of freedom. Does this regime of the Islamic Republic not speak now of democracy and freedom in its own way? Merely claiming democracy does not solve any problem. The problem is the content of this freedom and democracy. For instance, one cannot call a person democratic if he denies the national rights of the people of Kurdistan and other nationalities. There is no reason to cooperate with such a person, because then we will repeat the same story as that of the fall of the shah. How can I cooperate with a force that opposes national democratic rights at this moment? If you see that we do not cooperate with the monarchists, it is because they are undemocratic by nature. This is also true of all the other forces that on the surface talk about democracy and do not say precisely what they mean by this democracy. With such a unity, it would be better to return to the conditions in the shah's time.

A large number of those who espouse democracy today, including Reza Pahlavi and the large and small democratic and nondemocratic monarchists, have no objective but to return to a system similar to that of the shah's time.... What is the use of this, so that after all the efforts and suffering we return to what we were before? If there is going to be a change, it must be several steps, or at least one step, forward.

I will give you another example. You now live in France. There is freedom in France, and also democracy. But what difference do you see between the RPR [Rally for the Republic] and the Socialists? The differences are minor, but, in any case, the actions of the Socialists in the past two or three years were in another direction and were different from today. Of course, these actions were not practical, but, in any case, I consider these directions progressive.

[Keshtgar] But we cannot use the French as an example at all. We are captives of the Middle Ages and a suppressive regime which, in my opinion, threatens everything.

I believe there is no need for the forces that compose this front to stay together tomorrow to succeed this regime. One can be in power and another in opposition. Under democratic conditions, there might be 20 parties formed. But now, we are on a ship that is about to sink and our interests lie in saving the ship from sinking and all reaching the shore. Later, we will each go our own separate way.

Tomorrow in succeeding the regime, even you and I might become another opposition due to very slight differences. But we will both remain supporters of freedom.

You have said so far that you give priority to democracy over autonomy. You might cooperate with a person with whom you do not agree on the form of autonomy if he merely supports the destruction of the Islamic Republic, opposes monarchy, and is against a religious and dictatorial government, but, on the other hand, wants democracy in Iran, and vise versa. I know people who do not respond positively to autonomy, and I also know people who defend autonomy, but I doubt their support for freedom. I can even give you examples.

[Dr. Sa'id] No, do not give examples. The example that I gave was to show that conditions in France and Iran are different. We should not use the examples in Europe as a criterion. We must consider Iran in its particular conditions. You see that in a country like France, which has become institutionalized, there are still differences, and this is due to differences of views about solving the problems, the progressive view and the conservative view. Hence, in Iran, too, differences of opinion are bound to exist.

When you speak of democracy and freedom, you are speaking of something about of which everyone has some understanding. Reza Pahlavi is also a democrat. Rafsanjani even more than you and I. The issue is not claiming to be democratic, but to see what we offer under the name of democracy.

Democracy in France is the fruit of 200 years. In Iran, after the regime of the Islamic Republic, we will not immediately achieve this democracy. We must work. First, we must try to institutionalize this republic and democracy, and this requires moving forward the majority of the people of Iran, who suffer from political and cultural backwardness, in order for democracy and freedom to be institutionalized in Iran, which requires hard work. The French have done it in 200 years, in the ups and downs of their history after the revolution. It is a false notion to think that with the elimination of the

regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran we will face democracy immediately. For this reason, we are prepared to cooperate only with those who are perpared from now to institute democracy in Iran. A person who claims to be democratic and is not prepared to accept my democratic rights in Kurdistan is not democratic in my estimation. How can I cooperate with a person who, even before the regime is toppled, is opposed to my democratic demands? This front must abandon the slogan of "all together."

[Keshtgar] To what extent do you think this is practical?

[Dr. Sa'id] This is another issue. The Iranian intellectual must get out of this rut, this rut of analyzing everything outside of Iran with a progressive and democratic view, but when he goes back to Iran holding on to his old views. All the foreign ideas must be analyzed and then made to conform to the conditions in Iran.

[Keshtgar] But, Doctor, in my opinion, if profreedom opposition is not formed as soon as possible and tomorrow the riots in Mashhad are repeated in Tehran, they will either be severely suppressed or, if they are not and they result in the toppling of the regime, no force but the religious dictatorship of the Mojahedin or the Guard Corps or the Army will succeed Rafsanjani, and a suppressive government will be reestablished. Moreover, without a democratic and powerful alternative, we will not even be able to take advantage of the international democratic resources. In my opinion, under these circumstances, we must be less severe and not worry about the details. You are being too harsh. If you say that a person who does not accept autonomy is not democratic, others might also say that autonomy is ultimately secession, and we do not believe in it.

[Dr. Sa'id] Let me explain. How do you see the Government of Turkey?

[Keshtgar] In my opinion, a 100-percent democratic government does not exist. France is a thousand times more democratic than Turkey, and Turkey is a hundred times more democratic than Iran.

[Dr. Sa'id] Very well. Turkey is a republic, what we want for Iran. In it, there is no longer talk of going back to a caliphate. But in this so-called democratic republic, what are the rights of the Kurds or the leftist forces? As a leftist force, which we are proud to be—even under the present conditions that some consider a disgrace, we consider ourselves leftists—now, suppose that at this very moment the regime of the Islamic Republic is removed and a government such as that of Turkey replaces it. I do not want such a government, because I do not want after all this struggle to be in a situation like that of the Kurdish and leftist forces in Turkey. How long should we go backwards in this progressive world? With the coming of the Islamic regime, we went back several centuries. All we wish is to reach the 18th century from the 15th century, but why should we not reach the 21st century?

[Keshtgar] One cannot make a hundred-year journey overnight. How do you consider the government of Spain? Is it a democratic government?

[Dr. Sa'id] Yes.

[Keshtgar] Then how do you account for the Basques? Why doesn't Gonzales give the Basques autonomy?

[Dr. Sa'id] This is not the issue. The Government of Spain agrees to autonomy. In Spain, there are five to seven autonomous regions, such as Barcelona and Catalan.

The issue is that in Spain one can have democratic activity in favor of autonomy. But the Basque Liberation Army wants to achieve its goals with armed struggle under the circumstances when there is the possibility of democratic struggle.

[Keshtgar] No, that is not so. The Government of Spain does not agree to autonomy for the Basques, perhaps it is merely afraid that in the Basque region, people might choose secession.

[Dr. Sa'id] No, in Spain the problem does not come from the socialist government but from the Basque liberation armed struggle movement, which opposes democratic solutions.

[Keshtgar] At least you see that the issue of autonomy that you talk about is not simple, that everyone who does not accept autonomy would not be profreedom or democratic.

[Dr. Sa'id] You see, as [a representative of] the Kurdish Democratic Party, I cannot accept such an argument. You who have no nationality problem might agree with it. I cannot cooperate with a person who opposes autonomy for Kurdistan from the start.

[Keshtgar] Then how can we unite the forces that oppose the regime and support democracy in a democratic front? How can we bring together two tendencies, one that opposes and one that supports autonomy? If such a unity is not made, we shall not be able to make progress. We must find a way to be able to advance in any form.

[Dr. Sa'id] I gave my explanation, and that is that the Kurdish Democratic Party can move in a front formed of other forces without specifying the details. Yes, this is practical, but this must be formed around three or four clear principles, not such vague terms as freedom and democracy. These principles are: democracy for Iran; a republic; acceptance of all the rights of the people of Iran; and a clear position on institutionalizing the essential elements of a republic and democracy, that is, social justice and the harmonious economic and social growth of the oppressed people of Iran who comprise the majority, and this is the same as being progressive.

[Keshtgar] It seems that your proposal is more for the creation of a party and not for the formation of a united front to eliminate the regime of the Islamic Republic.

[Dr. Sa'id] The regime of the Islamic Republic shall go.

[Keshtgar] Why should this force have to be necessarily a leftist one?

[Dr. Sa'id] If it is not leftist, it will not cooperate with me. There is no reason for me to share the results of years of the hard struggle of the people of Kurdistan with a person who will oppose and negate the wishes of my people from the first day.

[Keshtgar] Which forces specifically will you contact?

[Dr. Sa'id] I have not yet had the chance to meet with the representatives of other forces. Certainly, I will try to meet with other forces and, if possible, form a united front around the principles set forth. We shall be forthcoming and will employ all our resources to form this front. We are prepared to speak with various forces, but in regards to cooperation, the issue is different. We cannot cooperate with the monarchists, nor with the forces that oppose autonomy, nor under the banner of Mr. Rafsanjani. In regard to other forces, we will not reject unity. It is they who, by changing and revealing their former views, by negating violent struggle and negating autonomy, do not want to cooperate with us and reject us.

[Keshtgar] No, they will not reject you. On the contrary, they are strongly interested in cooperating with you. But it is you who are being difficult.

[Dr. Sa'id] No, it is they. Conditions such as rejecting any sort of violence and trying to convince us to give up armed struggle and give ourselves up (of course, we also oppose violence, but we have to use it, these are tactics) cannot be considered conditions for cooperation or raising the issue of statehood, the definition of which is not clear, and if it were it is nothing but reducing the issue of Kurdistan to an issue like that of (the urban affairs of) Esfahan and Shiraz. And this, in other words, is to dismiss the Kurdish Democratic Party and, by contacting the monarchists, [who say] it is ultimately the assembly of the founders that will decide about the fate of Iran, vote for monarchy, which they will not, and so far they have expressed their views several times, I shall remain an opponent of it [as published]. But I shall not fight them with arms. These are the factors that prevent the several-year-old negotiations from getting anywhere.